

Brief History and Background of the Japanese American Internment

February 19, 1942:

- President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order (E.O.) 9066, pursuant to which 120,000 Japanese American and legal resident aliens were incarcerated in internment camps during World War II. Many of these families lost their property and possessions during the several years they were placed behind barbed wire.

In 1944:

- Justice Frank Murphy, in his dissenting opinion in *Korematsu v. United States*, noted that "not one person of Japanese ancestry was accused or convicted of espionage or sabotage after Pearl Harbor while they were still free, a fact which is some evidence of the loyalty of the vast majority of these individuals and of the effectiveness of the established methods of combating these evils."

February 19, 1976:

- President Gerald Ford formally rescinded E.O. 9066.

July 21, 1980:

- Congress adopted legislation, signed by President Jimmy Carter on July 31, 1980, establishing the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) to investigate the claim that the incarceration of Japanese American and legal resident aliens during World War II was justified by military necessity.
- The CWRIC held 20 days of hearings and listened to testimony from over 750 witnesses, and published its findings in a report entitled "Personal Justice Denied".
- The CWRIC's principal finding in 1982 was that "the promulgation of E.O. 9066 was not justified by military necessity, and the decision which followed from it--detention, ending detention, and ending exclusion--were not driven by analysis of military conditions but rather the causes that shaped these decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership." (emphasis added).

In 1987:

- The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals held in *Hirabayashi v. United States* that the U.S. government had suppressed evidence that contradicted its assertion that the internment of the Japanese Americans was based on military necessity.
- In the case, the 9th Circuit affirmed the granting of Gordon Hirabayashi's petition of Coram Nobis and ordered the vacating of his criminal convictions for violating curfew and exclusion orders. These convictions had been previously affirmed in the 1940s by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Hirabayashi* as well as in *Korematsu*. In both cases before the Supreme Court, evidence showing that it was not a military necessity to incarcerate those of Japanese ancestry had been suppressed by the government.

In 1988:

- With a strong bi-partisan vote, Congress passed H.R. 442, the Civil Liberties Act, which states in part: "for these fundamental violations of the basic civil liberties and constitutional rights of these individuals of Japanese ancestry, the Congress apologizes on behalf of the Nation".
- President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act into law on August 10, 1988, at which time he proclaimed, "This is a great day for America".

February 5, 2003:

- Congressman Mike Honda introduced H. Res. 56 a resolution supporting the goals of the Japanese American, German American, and Italian American communities in recognizing a National Day of Remembrance to increase public awareness of the events surrounding the restriction, exclusion, and internment of individuals and families during World War II.
- H. Res. 56 has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee and currently has over 60 co-sponsors.